

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (previously presented) A method for exchanging documents in transactions between partners that are joined in an exchange network, the partners communicating with each other via a hub entity, the method comprising:

storing an agreement associated with each document type for each partner that joins the exchange network, wherein each agreement defines one or more rules about the data format in which the respective partner sends and receives documents of the document type;

placing in a file receive location a document from a first partner, the file receive location being password protected such that only a partner that provides a correct identity with any document it sends may place that document at the file receive location; and

performing steps, by the hub entity, including,

retrieving the document from the file receive location,

validating the document against its respective agreement,

transforming the document into a standard document format that is partner system platform neutral and that is a different data format than the format in which the document from the first partner was received,

assigning a key to the document for future references,

processing the document based on the agreement, the process including applying rules of the hub entity and rules of the first partner, and

based on the corresponding agreement, transforming the processed document from the standard format into an altered document format that is associated with a second partner and sending the altered document to the second partner.

2. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the agreement defines business rules that determine how documents are sent and received as well as their format.

3. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the key is unique to the document for all future reference points and it is sent along with the document.

4. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the standard format is a more flexible format accommodating business rules that are common.
5. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein there is a common process for processing the document based on the agreement.
6. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein setting up the agreement for at partner that joins the exchange network involves creating a document-mapping between a partner's native format and the standard format.
7. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein any document-mapping for mapping from a native format to the standard format for any document type of a previously-joined partner that is already present at the hub entity need not be recreated, thereby avoiding document-mapping maintenance each time a net' partner joins the exchange network.
8. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the mapping to and from the standard format is document-type-specific.
9. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the document-mapping is created by using a graphical tool in a drag-and-drop fashion.
10. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein once created any document-mapping is stored in a database.
11. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein although the process is similar for each document, the processing result is different for each partner as it is directed by the partner's business rules and policies.

12.-22. (canceled)

23. (previously presented) A method for exchanging documents in a trade of goods transaction between partners that are joined in an exchange network of a hub entity, the partners being part of a supply chain and trading with each other via the hub entity, the method comprising:

 sending purchase order document to a seller via a document exchange at the hub entity;

 acknowledging receipt of the purchase order document to a buyer via the document exchange if the purchase order document includes an indication that acknowledgement is expected;

 wherein each of the documents sent or received via the document exchange is respectively transformed into and/or out of a standard format that is partner and system platform neutral and that is a different data format than the format in which the purchase order document was received and is processed based on an agreement that is partner specific and takes into account rules of the hub entity, wherein each agreement defines one or more rules about the format in which the specific partner sends and receives documents of the document type; and

 wherein the document exchange enables trading partners, including the buyer and seller, to exchange documents without the need to consider each other's native formats.

24. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the trade of goods transaction is repeatable and scalable.

25. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the purchase order document is a single purchase order document or multiple purchase order documents within a master document, each of the purchase order documents being individually extracted and placed into a message queue for separate purchase order processing.

26. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein for each document that is sent or received via the document exchange the agreement defines the format of that document, the manner in which it is sent and information about its receive location.

27. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 26, wherein the information pertains to username, password and server.
28. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein for each purchase order document conveyed via the document exchange, information about the trade of goods transaction including an order status is recorded to an order database where it can be viewed from within a community application.
29. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising: instantiating an order process including
 waiting for acknowledgement if the acknowledgement is expected, including
 monitoring a message queue in which acknowledgements are placed when received; and
 setting an order status to complete and ending the order process instance if the acknowledgement is not expected.
30. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 29, wherein a timeout defines a wait period associated with the waiting such that when the wait period elapses the instantiated order process initiates a timeout notification and ends the order process instance.
31. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein if the wait period elapses a purchase order indicated in the purchase order document is considered void.
32. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein each of the documents has a place holder indication prompting the document exchange to expect follow-up documents.

33. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein each of the documents passing through the document exchange is placed in a file receive location that is password protected so that access thereto is limited to a properly identified partner.
34. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 33, wherein each document extracted from its file receive location is validated against its associated agreement before it is mapped into the standard format.
35. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 25, wherein an order process instantiated in relation to a master document is capable of handling individually each of a plurality of acknowledgments.
36. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising: detecting any inconsistency between the purchase order document and the acknowledgment; and providing notification of any detected inconsistency.
37. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising:
checking the purchase order document and acknowledgement for any inconsistency relative to an inconsistency threshold defined in conjunction with the agreement, the inconsistency threshold triggering an order cancellation process if surpassed.
38. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising:
if the purchase order document so requires, providing to the buyer via the document exchange one or more of
an advance shipping notice, and
a functional acknowledgement.

39. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising: providing an invoice to the buyer via the document exchange.

40.-56. (canceled)